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CEREBUS
mothers & daughters
44

2nd annual
BETHESDA
small
PRESS
EXPO

BETHESDA,
maryland
June 23, 1995

see
inside
back
cover
for
details

CEREBUS
WORLD
TOUR

194
MAY

CEREBUS
NO. 194 MAY 1995

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MOTHERS & DAUGHTERS
a novel

•

BOOK ONE
(Cerebus 151 to Cerebus 162)
Flight

•

BOOK TWO
(Cerebus 163 to Cerebus 174)
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BOOK THREE
(Cerebus 175 to Cerebus 186)
Reads

•

BOOK FOUR
(Cerebus 187 to Cerebus 200)
Minds

MONTHLY
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Without question, one of the largest frustrations in advocating a change in the thinking of comic-store owners at this late date in the twentieth century is their insistence that the status quo must be adhered to. Even the best and the brightest of these individuals (while agreeing in principle with the notion that super-heroes are not as marketable as they once were and that there is unexplored potential in the small-press and self-publishing arenas) cling to the inviolable 'law' that super-hero comics must yet dominate their environment, that each cautious step away from the Marvel/DC/Image environs is an incremental move along the pathway to oblivion. In these discussions with retailers, their fear is very nearly a palpable thing, masquerading behind a thin façade of dispassionate reason. Efforts to shift focus and emphasis in these stores three or four steps away from the presupposition — a nearly complete failure in the last three years — might be accomplished more extensively by (oddly enough) Marvel Entertainment Group's recent maneuvers. Microcosms of the non-Heroes World distributors, the stores (I would speculate) will find that while the cloud of losing thirty percent of their revenues looms on the horizon, within it is the silver lining of a thirty-percent drop in expenditures. Theoretical, you say?

Enter Stephen L. Holland (and his partner and co-manager Mark Simpson).

Enter PAGE 45.

The following report on PAGE 45*'s first six months of operation speaks for itself. Eloquently. Although Stephen provided his own emphasis on the word 'tenth' (you'll know it when you get there), I was tempted to specify that Linda run it out in a… say… 72-point Baskerville. TENTH! Remember it. As in 'ONE TENTH'. It makes all the hours of arguing with my friends in the retail community worthwhile.*

If you are fortunate enough to live in the U.K., wherever you are, you are no more than a few hours' drive or train ride from PAGE 45.

I wish I could say that.

I have tried every way I can think of to express my belief.

'Given the right opportunity, quality will beat non-quality.'

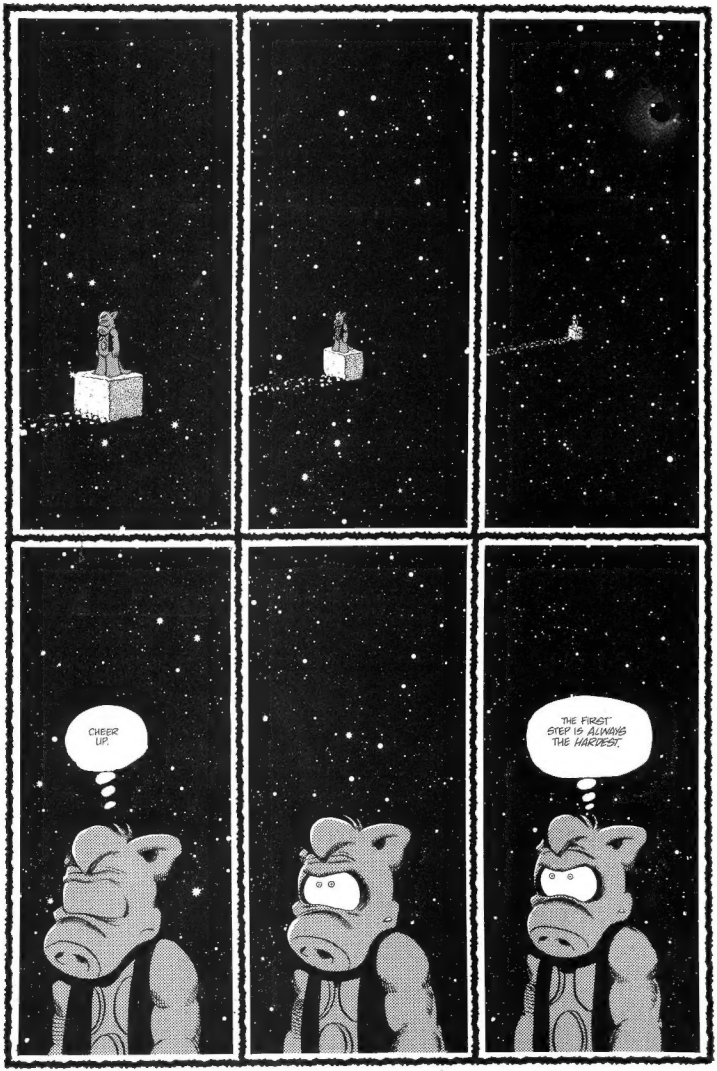
'If your store is full of shit, you can only expect to attract flies.'

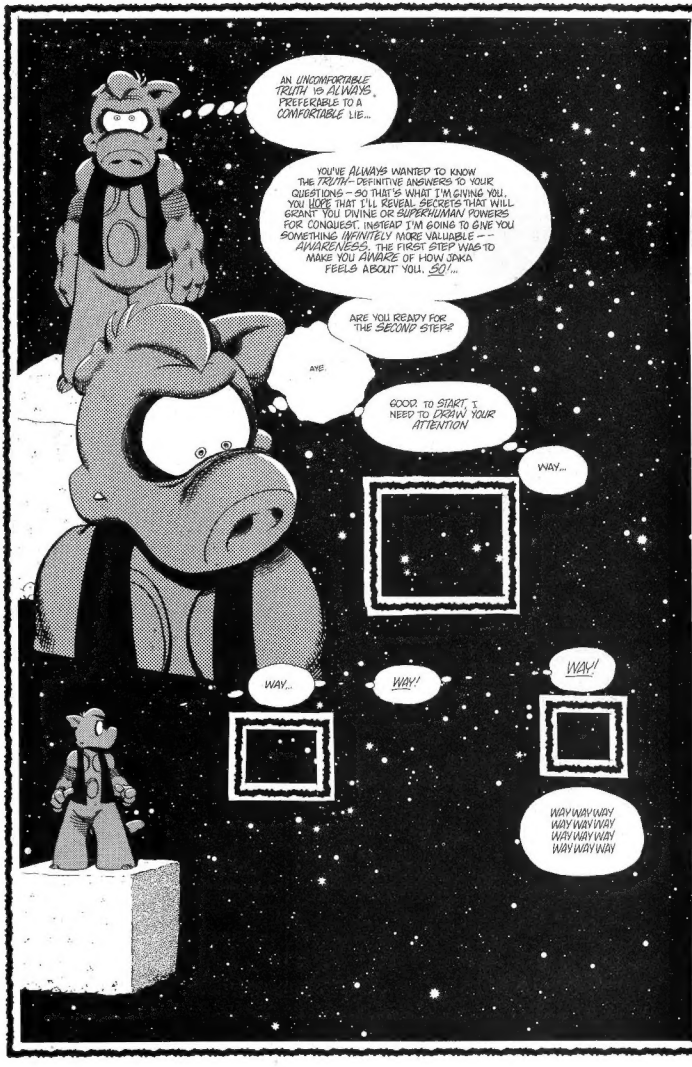
I've tried to say it politely, I've said it rudely, I've said it humorously, I've used metaphors and allegories, rhetoric and hyperbole.

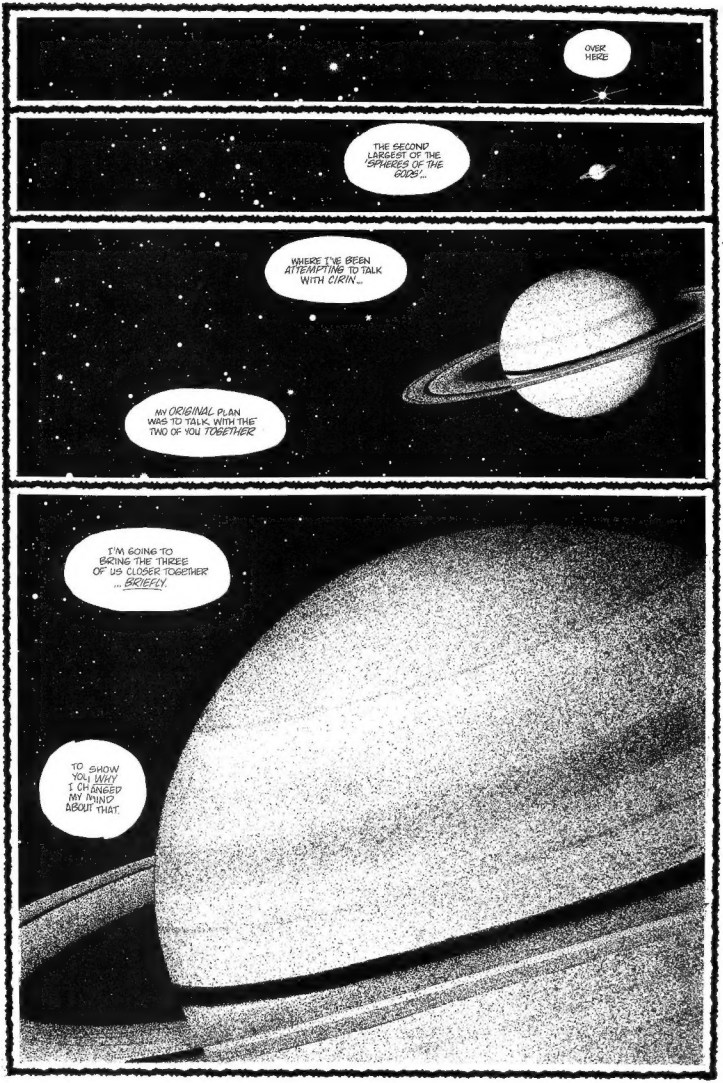
Now I'm going to let Stephen say it.

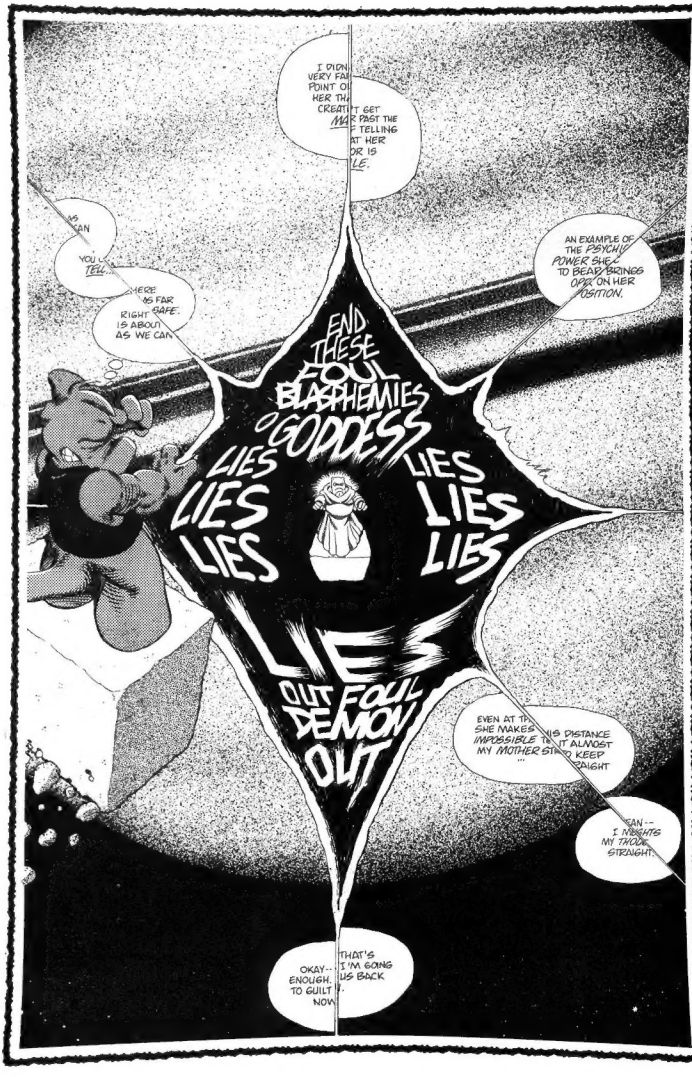
PAGE 45 *can be found at 9 Market Street in Nottingham, England, NG1 6HY. The telephone number is (0115) 9508045.*

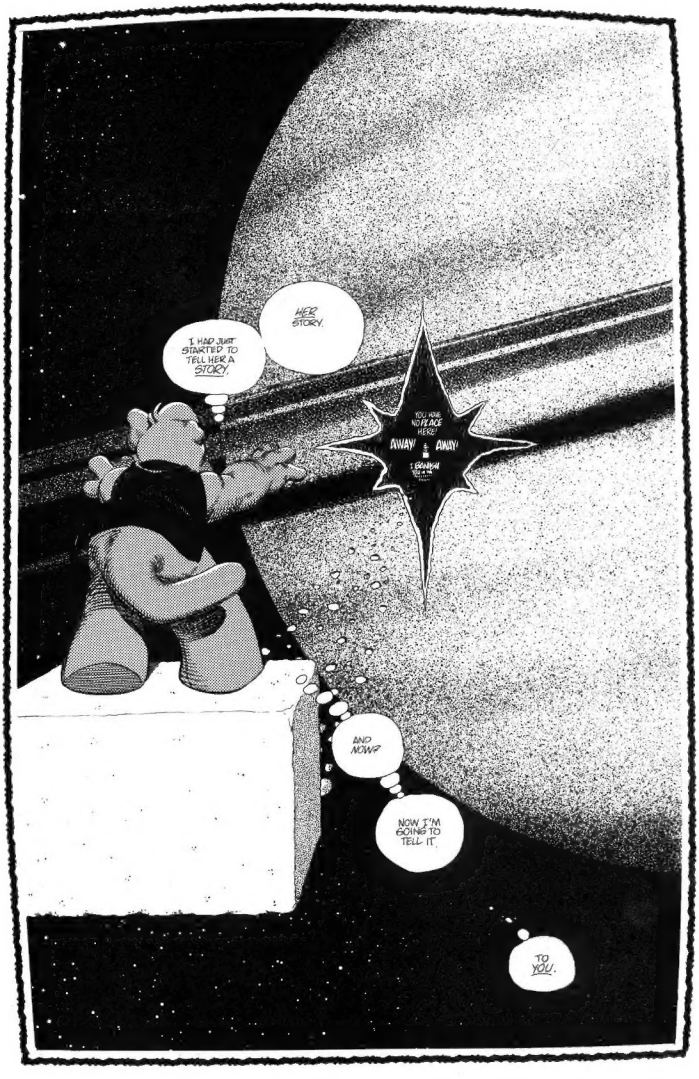
Thank you, Stephen and Mark. It's been a long time coming.

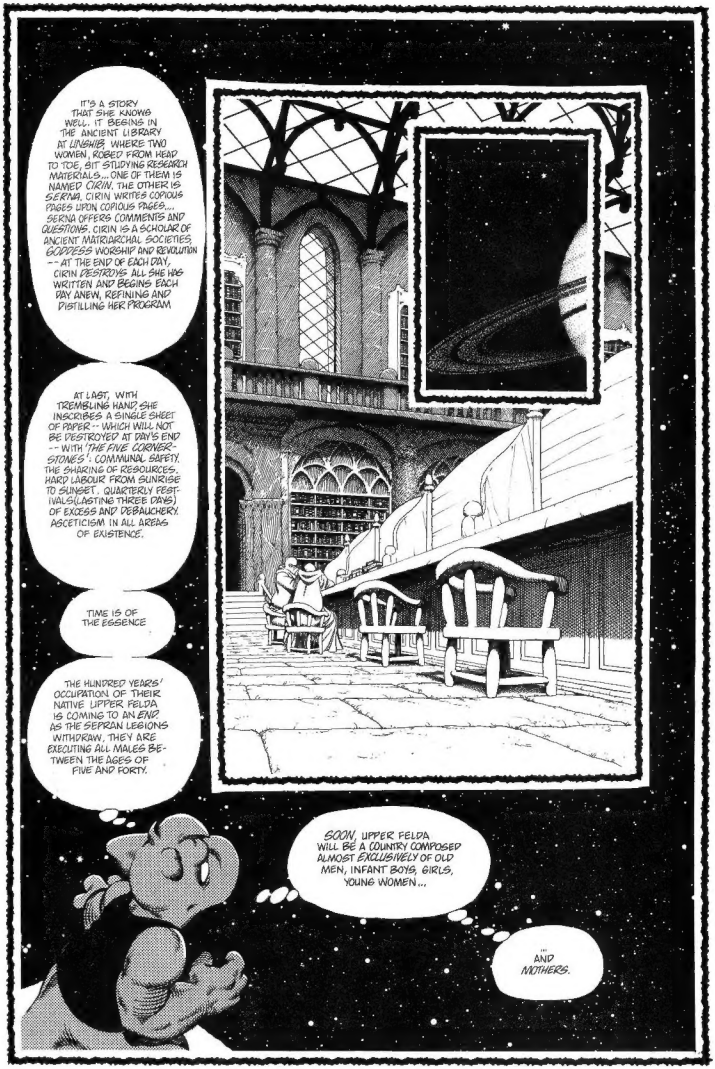

CHEER UP.
THE FIRST STEP IS ALWAYS THE HARDEST.

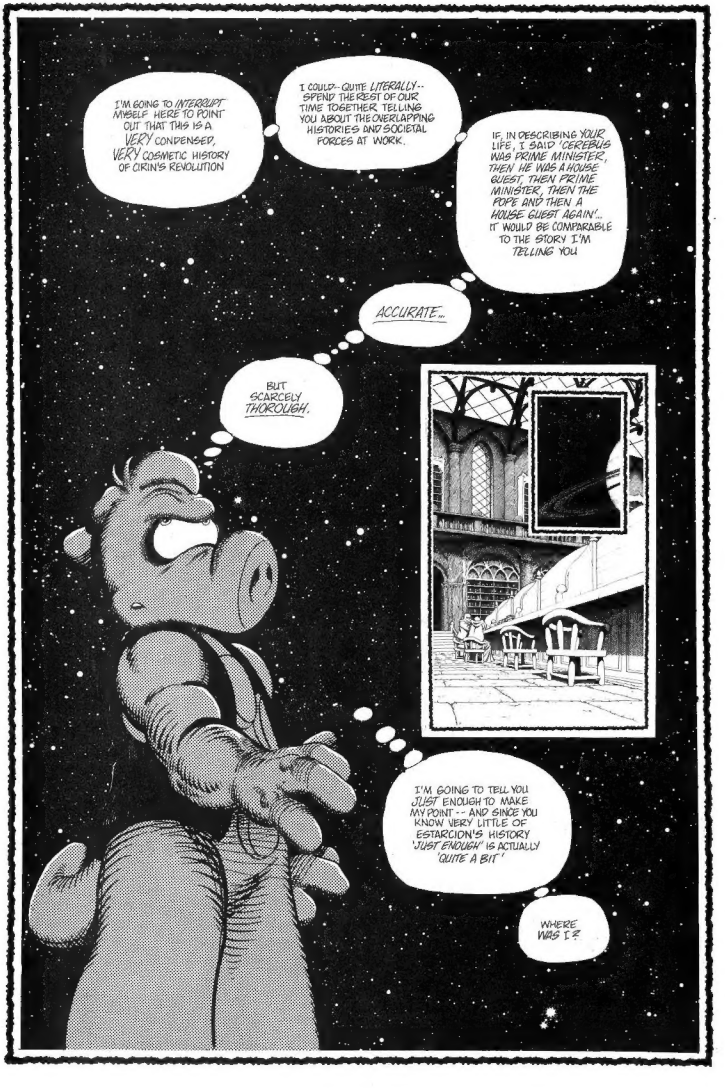

AN UNCOMFORTABLE TRUTH IS ALWAYS PREFERABLE TO A COMFORTABLE LIE...
YOU'VE ALWAYS WANTED TO KNOW THE TRUTH-- DEFINITIVE ANSWERS TO YOUR QUESTIONS -- SO THAT'S WHAT I'M GIVING YOU. YOU HOPE THAT I'LL REVEAL SECRETS THAT WILL GRANT YOU DIVINE OR SUPERHUMAN POWERS FOR CONQUEST. INSTEAD I'M GOING TO GIVE YOU SOMETHING INFINITELY MORE VALUABLE -- AWARENESS. THE FIRST STEP WAS TO MAKE YOU AWARE OF HOW JAKA FEELS ABOUT YOU. SO!...
ARE YOU READY FOR THE SECOND STEP?
AYE.
GOOD. TO START, I NEED TO DRAW YOUR ATTENTION
WAY...
WAY...
WAY!
WAY!
WAY WAY WAY WAY WAY WAY WAY WAY WAY WAY WAY WAY


OVER HERE
THE SECOND LARGEST OF THE "SPHERES OF THE GODS"...
WHERE I'VE BEEN ATTEMPTING TO TALK WITH CIRIN...
MY ORIGINAL PLAN WAS TO TALK WITH THE TWO OF YOU TOGETHER
I'M GOING TO BRING THE THREE OF US CLOSER TOGETHER ... BRIEFLY.
TO SHOW YOU WHY I CHANGED MY MIND ABOUT THAT.

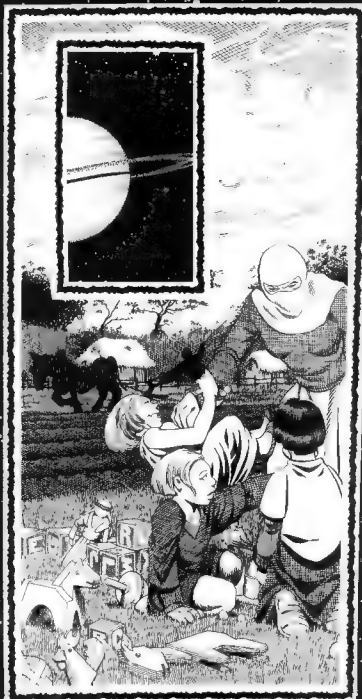

I DIDN
VERY FAR
POINT OF
HER TH
CREATI
T GET
MA
PAST THE
TELLING
AT HER
OR IS
LE.
AS CAN
YOU
TELL.
HERE AS FAR
RIGHT SAFE
IS ABOUT
AS WE CAN
AN EXAMPLE OF
THE PSYCHIC
POWER SHE
TO BEAR BRINGS
OPEN ON HER
POSITION.
END
THESE
FOUL
BLASPHEMIES
O GODDESS
LIES
LIES
LIES
LIES
LIES
LIES
LIES
LIES
OUT FOUL DEMON
OUT
EVEN AT
SHE MAKES
IMPOSSIBLE
MY MOTHER
IS DISTANCE
IT ALMOST
O KEEP
RAIGHT
SAN --
I NEGATES
MY TWIDDL
STRAIGHT
OKAY...
ENOUGH
TO GUILT
NOW
THAT'S
I'M GOING
US BACK
.


I HAD JUST STARTED TO TELL HER A STORY.
HER STORY.
YOU HAVE NO PLACE HERE!
AWAY!
&
AWAY!
I BRAHAM
AND NOW?
NOW I'M GOING TO TELL IT
TO YOU.


IT'S A STORY THAT SHE KNOWS WELL. IT BEGINS IN THE ANCIENT LIBRARY AT UNAHIB WHERE TWO WOMEN, ROBED FROM HEAD TO TOE, SIT STUDYING RESEARCH MATERIALS... ONE OF THEM IS NAMED CIRIN. THE OTHER IS SERNA. CIRIN WRITES COPIOUS PAGES UPON COPIOUS PAGES... SERNA OFFERS COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS. CIRIN IS A SCHOLAR OF ANCIENT MATRIARCHAL SOCIETIES, GODDESS WORSHIP AND REVOLUTION -- AT THE END OF EACH DAY, CIRIN DESTROYS ALL SHE HAS WRITTEN AND BEGINS EACH DAY ANEW, REFINING AND DISTILLING HER PROGRAM.
AT LAST, WITH TREMBLING HAND, SHE INSCRIBES A SINGLE SHEET OF PAPER -- WHICH WILL NOT BE DESTROYED AT DAY'S END -- WITH 'THE FIVE CORNERSTONES': COMMUNAL SAFETY, THE SHARING OF RESOURCES, HARD LABOUR FROM SUNRISE TO SUNSET, QUARTERLY FESTIVALS (LASTING THREE DAYS) OF EXCESS AND DEBAUCHERY, ASCETICISM IN ALL AREAS OF EXISTENCE.
TIME IS OF THE ESSENCE
THE HUNDRED YEARS' OCCUPATION OF THEIR NATIVE UPPER FELDA IS COMING TO AN END AS THE SEFRAN LEGIONS WITHDRAW, THEY ARE EXECUTING ALL MALES BETWEEN THE AGES OF FIVE AND FORTY.
SOON, UPPER FELDA WILL BE A COUNTRY COMPOSED ALMOST EXCLUSIVELY OF OLD MEN, INFANT BOYS, GIRLS, YOUNG WOMEN...
... AND MOTHERS.


I'M GOING TO INTERRUPT MYSELF HERE TO POINT OUT THAT THIS IS A VERY CONDENSED, VERY COSMETIC HISTORY OF ORIN'S REVOLUTION
I COULD- QUITE LITERALLY-- SPEND THE REST OF OUR TIME TOGETHER TELLING YOU ABOUT THE OVERLAPPING HISTORIES AND SOCIETAL FORCES AT WORK.
IF, IN DESCRIBING YOUR LIFE, I SAID 'CEREBUS WAS PRIME MINISTER, THEN HE WAS A HOUSE GUEST, THEN PRIME MINISTER, THEN THE POPE AND THEN A HOUSE GUEST AGAIN'.. IT WOULD BE COMPARABLE TO THE STORY I'M TELLING YOU
ACCURATE...
BUT SCARCELY THOROUGH.
I'M GOING TO TELL YOU JUST ENOUGH TO MAKE MY POINT -- AND SINCE YOU KNOW VERY LITTLE OF ESTARCION'S HISTORY 'JUST ENOUGH' IS ACTUALLY 'QUITE A BIT'
WHERE WAS I?

AH!
CIRIN AND GERNA INTRODUCE THEIR REVOLUTION WITHIN THEIR RURAL COMMUNITY OF RIVERSIDE – THE WEEKLY QUILTING CIRCLE THEY HAD PARTICIPATED IN SINCE YOUNG ADULTHOOD. MOTHERS, YOUNG AND OLD, MOST ARE RECENTLY WIDOWED, THEIR HUSBANDS EXECUTED BY THE SEPRAN LEGIONS WHICH HAVE BEEN RECALLED TO SHORE UP A CRUMBLING EMPIRE.
FEAR OF THE FUTURE, MOST PARTICULARLY, THEIR CHILDREN'S FUTURE PROVIDES THEIR MOTIVE IN EMBRACING THE 'FIVE CORNERSTONES'
THE GREATEST HURDLE? PERSUADING EVERYONE TO WEAR THE ROBES. BUT CIRIN IS INSISTENT -- ASCETIC LIVING CAN ALLOW FOR NO VANITY AND NO INTRUSION BY VANITY'S DISTINCTIONS: WHO IS ATTRACTIVE AND WHO IS PLAIN? WHOSE HAIR IS LONGEST, THE MOST STYLISH? WHO HAS THE BEST COMPLEXION? THE NICEST CLOTHES?
THE MOST ATTRACTIVE OF THEM, THE ONES WITH THE LONGEST OR THE MOST STYLISH HAIR, THE BEST COMPLEXIONS, THE NICEST CLOTHES ARE THE LAST TO CAPITULATE
A NEW AWARENESS OVERTAKES THEM NOW, INSULATED WITHIN THEIR ROBES. ALL ANXIETY ABOUT THEIR APPEARANCES SUBSIDES, WITH NO COSMETIC BASIS UPON WHICH TO JUDGE ONE ANOTHER THEIR ATTENTIONS MOVE QUICKLY FROM SURFACE ISSUES TO ISSUES OF SUBSTANCE.
THEY ARE NOW EQUALS.
AND IT IS AS EQUALS THAT THEIR REAL WORK BEGINS.



SO LITTLE IS REQUIRED FOR SUBSISTENCE LIVING... WHAT FOOD THEY HAVE IN THEIR LARDERS IN THIS IMPOVERISHED COMMUNITY IS SHARED EQUALLY - LIKEWISE THEIR TOOLS, UTENSILS. THOSE WHO ARE ADEPT AT HUNTING, HUNT. THOSE WITH AN APTITUDE FOR FISHING, FISH

FROM DAWN TO DUSK

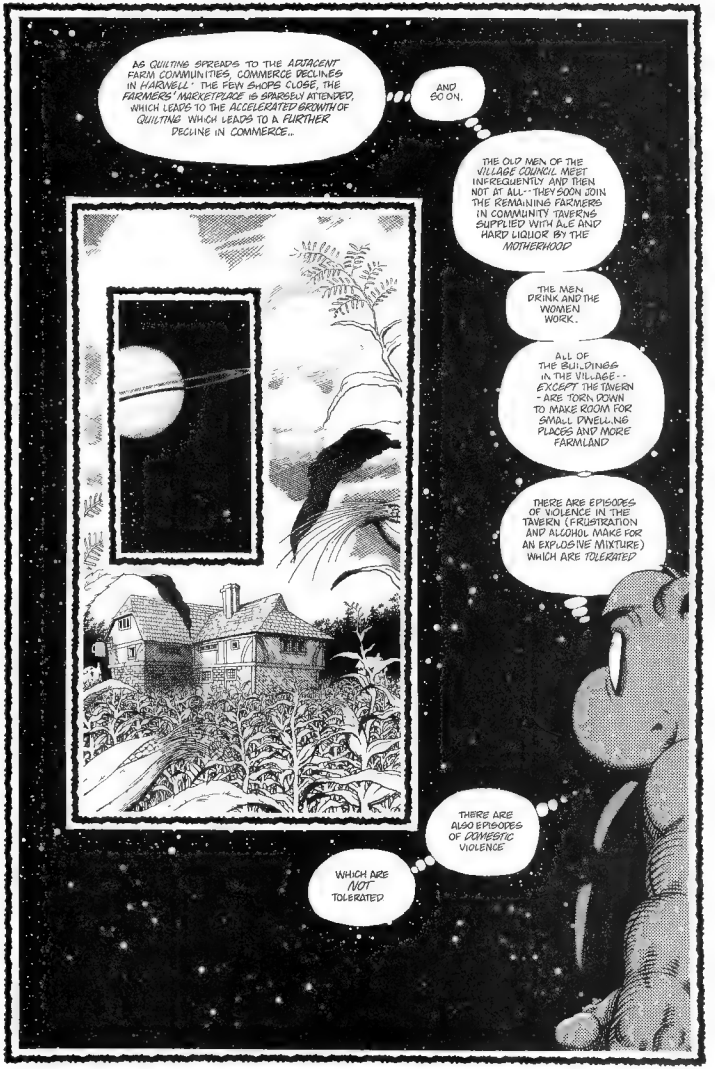
CIRIN AND SERNA HAVE NO NAME FOR THEIR REVOLUTION. THE WOMEN ARE KNOWN, VARIOUSLY, AS 'THE MOTHERS', 'MOTHERHOOD', 'THE MOTHERHOOD' OR, SIMPLY, 'MOTHERS'. WITHIN THE GROUP, THEIR ACTIVITIES -- GREAT AND SMALL -- ARE REFERRED TO AS 'QUILTING'

THE EXISTENCE IS HARD, THE INDIVIDUAL RATIONS SMALL - MOST OF THESE RESERVED FOR THE CHILDREN WHO ARE CARED FOR IN SHIFTS IN THE FIELDS, BY THE RIVER BANKS, AT THE FISHING HOLES...

THERE ARE NO SUPERVISORY POSITIONS... THOSE WHO DESIGN THE COMFORTABLE DWELLINGS PARTICIPATE IN ALL AREAS OF CONSTRUCTION

WHERE THERE IS SURPLUS, IT IS STORED CAREFULLY IN ANTICIPATION OF THE NEXT SEASON'S FESTIVAL DAYS

HARWELL, THE NEAREST VILLAGE, BEGINS TO CHANGE


AS QUILTING SPREADS TO THE ADJACENT FARM COMMUNITIES, COMMERCE DECLINES IN HARWELL. THE FEW SHOPS CLOSE, THE FARMERS' MARKETPLACE IS SPARSELY ATTENDED, WHICH LEADS TO THE ACCELERATED GROWTH OF QUILTING WHICH LEADS TO A FURTHER DECLINE IN COMMERCE..
AND SO ON.
THE OLD MEN OF THE VILLAGE COUNCIL MEET INFREQUENTLY AND THEN NOT AT ALL--THEY SOON JOIN THE REMAINING FARMERS IN COMMUNITY TAVERNS SUPPLIED WITH ALE AND HARD LIQUOR BY THE MOTHERHOOD
THE MEN DRINK AND THE WOMEN WORK.
ALL OF THE BUILDINGS IN THE VILLAGE--EXCEPT THE TAVERN--ARE TORN DOWN TO MAKE ROOM FOR SMALL DWELLING PLACES AND MORE FARMLAND
THERE ARE EPISODES OF VIOLENCE IN THE TAVERN (FRUSTRATION AND ALCOHOL MAKE FOR AN EXPLOSIVE MIXTURE) WHICH ARE TOLERATED
THERE ARE ALSO EPISODES OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE
WHICH ARE NOT TOLERATED

THIS IS COMMUNAL SAFETY, WHICH IS SERNA'S JURISDICTION. (CORIN CHOOSES TO REMAIN IGNORANT OF THE DETAILS). COMMITTING VIOLENCE AGAINST A WOMAN -- ANY VIOLENCE, ANY WOMAN -- IS PUNISHABLE BY SWIFT EXECUTION.
THESE EXECUTIONS ARE CARRIED OUT BY SERNA UNDER COVER OF NIGHT -- THE ACCUSED'S THROAT IS CUT
AFTER SEVERAL HUSBANDS AND FATHERS AND GRANDFATHERS HAVE DIED, ABUSE GOES UNREPORTED FOR A TIME
ROBES AND HOODS EFFECTIVELY CONCEAL CUTS AND BRUISES
AND THEN A QUIET-NATURED MOTHER MENTIONS OCCASIONAL SLAPS AND PUNCHES ADMINISTERED BY HER HUSBAND OF TWENTY YEARS
HE IS FOUND WITH HIS THROAT CUT.
AT THE NEXT QUILTING CIRCLE EVERYONE WAITS TO HEAR WHAT SHE WILL SAY.
SHE DISCUSSES A SWEATER SHE IS KNITTING AND A FAMILY OF RABBITS SHE FOUND THAT MORNING.
SEVERAL MORE PERPETRATORS ARE IDENTIFIED AND EXECUTED
SOON, EVEN THE TAVERN BECOMES FREE FROM VIOLENCE.
THE MEN GROW OLDER. THE MEN DRINK. THE MEN DIE.

SERNA TRAINS HER SISTERHOOD OF ASSASSINS IN SECRET. CALLING THEM 'CIRINISTS', AN HOMAGE TO THE MASTERMIND OF THE REVOLUTION. SHE SELECTS THE BIGGEST AND THE STRONGEST OF THE WOMEN FOR *INDUCTION*..

THE BOYS, LIKE THEIR FATHERS AND GRANDFATHERS DRINK AND OCCUPY THEIR TIME WITH SPORT AND RECREATIONS.

WHEN THEY REACH YOUNG MANHOOD THEY ARE CHOSEN BY THEIR *LIFE MATES* FOR PURPOSES OF *PROCREATION*...

IN THE FIFTH YEAR, LOWER FELDA ATTEMPTS AN *INVASION* OF ITS EASTERN NEIGHBOUR, SEIZING LAND BUT FINDING THAT THE ONLY FOOD STORES ARE THOSE SET ASIDE FOR THE *QUARTERLY FESTIVALS*...

THEY ATTEMPT TO IMPOSE TAXATION AND FIND THAT UPPER FELDA HAS NO *CURRENCY* OR PRECIOUS METALS. BUILDINGS AND RESIDENCES TO HOUSE THE *OCCUPATIONAL GOVERNMENT* MUST BE CONSTRUCTED FROM MATERIALS IMPORTED AT *PROHIBITIVE* EXPENSE

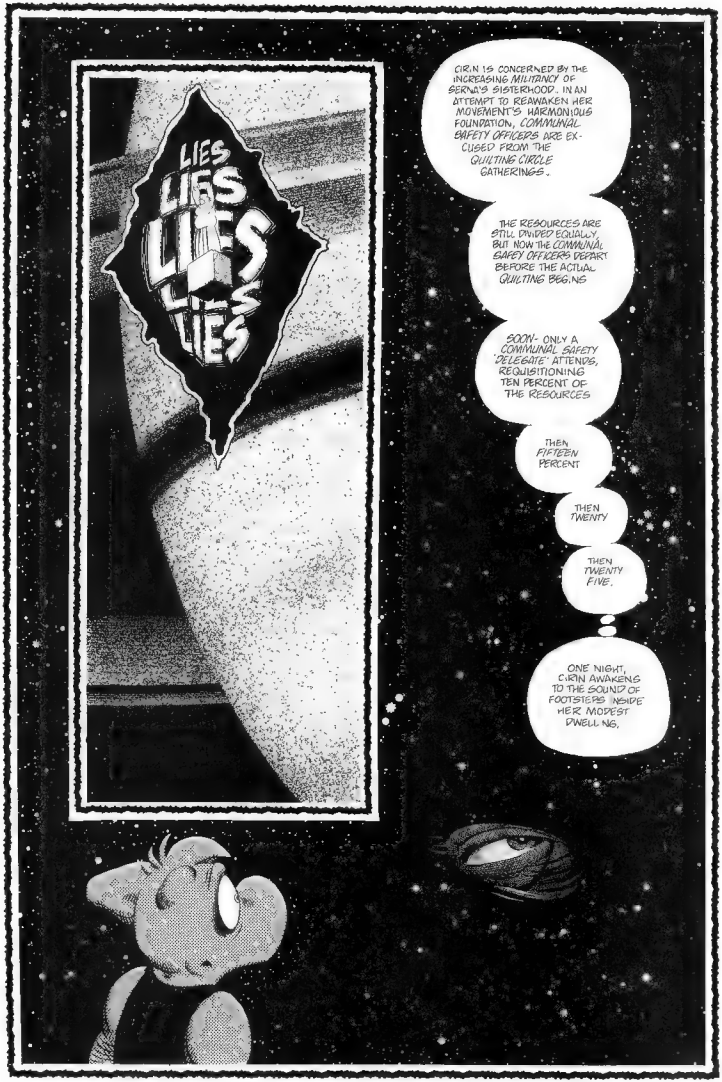
SOLDIERS ATTEMPTING TO PRESS THE MOTHERS INTO SERVICE ARE FOUND WITH THEIR THROATS CUT.

INSIDE OF A YEAR, FIFTY PER CENT. OF THE *GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT* OF LOWER FELDA IS REQUIRED TO SUPPORT AND MAINTAIN THE *TOTTERING* OCCUPATIONAL *REGIME*.

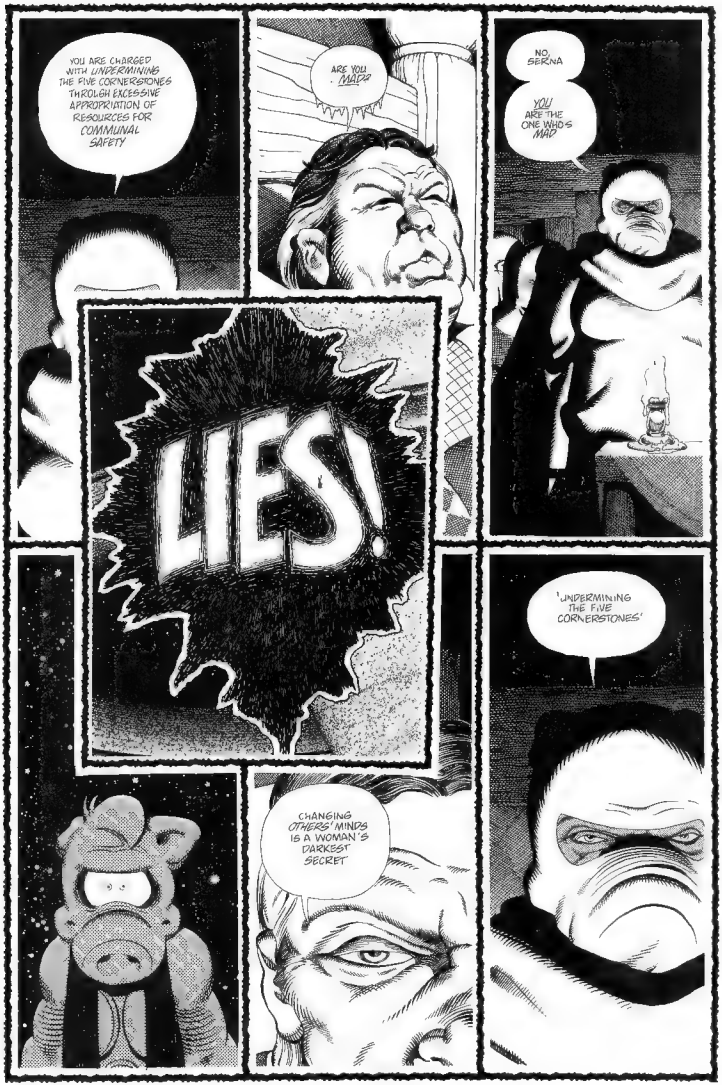
THE NUMBER OF MERCENARIES IS *DOUBLED*, AS IS THE DURATION OF EACH TOUR OF DUTY. THE CASUALTIES *QUADRUPLE*.

FRUSTRATION REACHES THE BOILING POINT IN LOWER FELDA. A MILITARY COUP DISPLACES THE OLIGARCHY. THE LARGEST MILITARY FORCE IN LOWER FELDAN HISTORY IS MOUNTED WHICH ONLY ESCALATES THE CASUALTY RATE. AFTER TWO YEARS THE ORDER IS GIVEN FOR LOWER FELDAN FORCES TO WITHDRAW
ALL LOWER FELDAN CIVILIANS IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES ARE ALSO ORDERED TO RETURN HOME.
A NETWORK OF FORTRESSES, CONNECTED BY STONE WALLS TWO METERS THICK AND SEVEN METERS HIGH, IS CONSTRUCTED BY THE LOWER FELDANS ALONG THE BORDER – THE GREAT IRON BARRIER
IN THE FARMING COMMUNITIES OF LOWER FELDA... REPRESENTING EIGHTY PERCENT OF ITS TERRITORY
REPATRIATED LOWER FELDAN MOTHERS DON ROBES AND HOODS AND FORM QUILTING CIRCLES.
COMMERCE IN THE SMALL VILLAGES AND TOWNS BEGINS TO SUFFER.
URBAN ECONOMIES RAVAGED BY THE BURDEN OF MILITARY MISADVENTURE DECLINE EVEN MORE RAPIDLY.

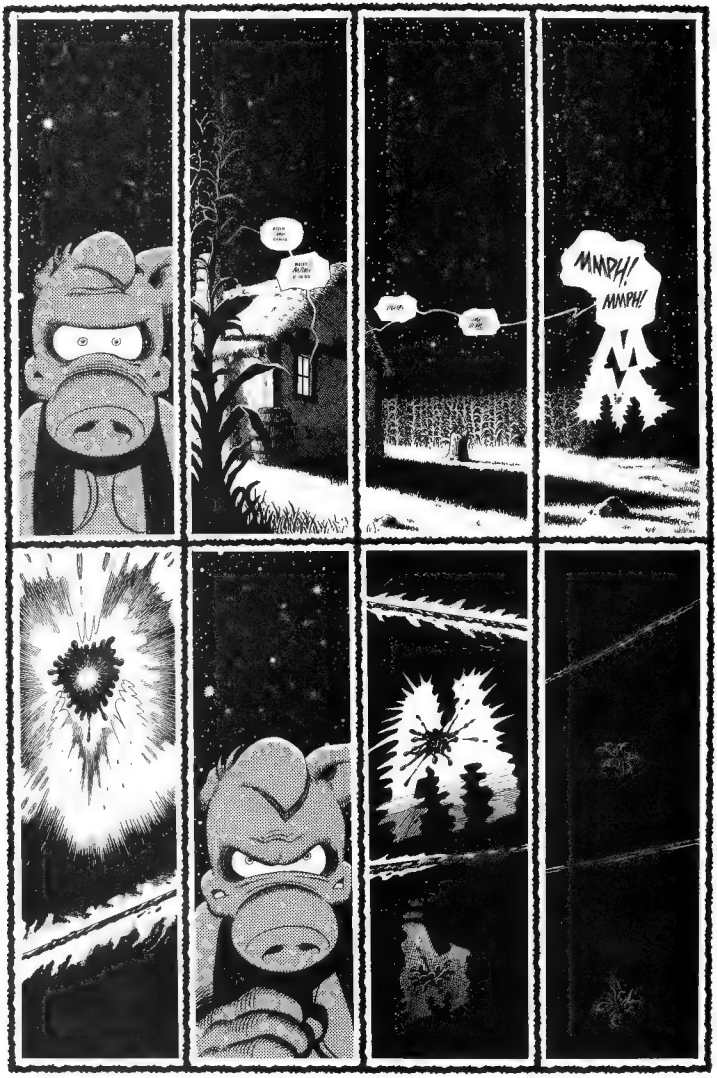
THE LOWER FELDAN MILITARY DICTATORSHIP (HUMILIATED BY UPPER FELDA) ARE THE FIRST TO MYTHOLOGIZE THE CIRINISTS AS A RACE OF BLOODTHIRSTY AMAZONS, NOCTURNAL DEMONESSES HUNTING, DISEMBOWELING AND DEVOURING THEIR HUMAN PREY
CIRIN IS REPUTED TO BE THOUSANDS OF YEARS OLD, CAPABLE OF TRANSFORMING HERSELF INTO ANY PREDATORY ANIMAL OR BIRD, RENDERING HERSELF INVISIBLE AND ROAMING THE MOONLIT FELDWAR COUNTRYSIDE AS A DISEMBODIED SHADOW
READS PUBLISHERS SEIZE ON THIS NEW DEMONIZED FOE (HAVING EXHAUSTED THE VAMPIRE FANS' POTENTIAL SOME TIME BEFORE). MANY LONG-OUT-OF PRINT READS DEALING WITH MATRIMONY AND MOTHERHOOD ARE CREDITED TO CIRIN AND (WITH THE ADDITION OF LURID COVERS AND ILLUSTRATIONS AND THE APPENDING OF BLOODY RETRIBUTION TO THE R HOMEMAKER HOMILIES) DOMINATE THE BEST-SELLER LISTS.
THE QUILTING CIRCLES SPREAD THROUGHOUT LOWER FELDA AND THE RURAL AREAS OF 'EST -- HOODS AND ROBES MORE EFFECTIVE THAN SHIELDS AND SWORDS IN MAINTAINING SAFETY..
SERNA FINDS HERSELF NEARLY OVERWHELMED BY APPLICANTS TO THE 'SECRET' SISTERHOOD -- EACH QUILTING CIRCLE SOON BOASTS AT LEAST A HALF DOZEN 'COMMUNAL SAFETY OFFICERS'
THE NAME CHANGE IS NECESSARY. 'CIRINIST' BECOMES THE UNIVERSAL DESIGNATION FOR THE HOODED AND ROBED WOMEN
DESPITE CIRIN'S OBJECTIONS
MONSTER MOTHERS of UPPER FELDA

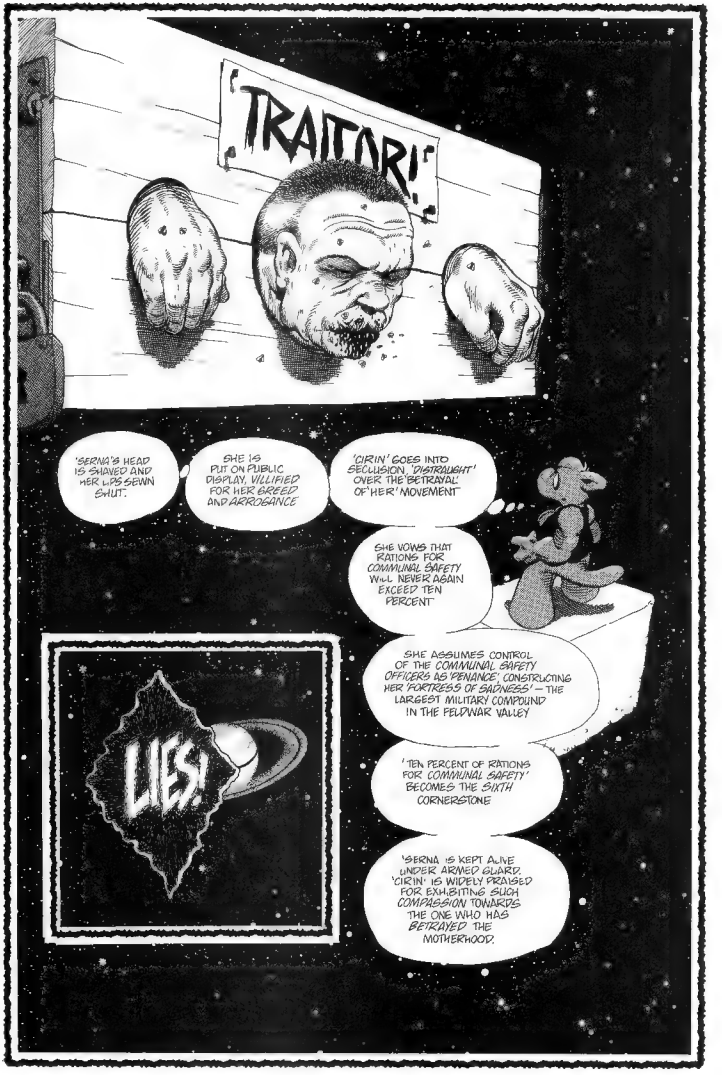

LIES
LIES
LIES
LIES
LIES
CIRIN IS CONCERNED BY THE INCREASING MILITANCY OF SERNA'S SISTERHOOD. IN AN ATTEMPT TO REAWAKEN HER MOVEMENT'S HARMONIOUS FOUNDATION, COMMUNAL SAFETY OFFICERS ARE EXCLUDED FROM THE QUILTING CIRCLE GATHERINGS.
THE RESOURCES ARE STILL DIVIDED EQUALLY, BUT NOW THE COMMUNAL SAFETY OFFICERS DEPART BEFORE THE ACTUAL QUILTING BEGINS
SOON- ONLY A COMMUNAL SAFETY 'DELEGATE' ATTENDS, REQUISITIONING TEN PERCENT OF THE RESOURCES
THEN, FIFTEEN PERCENT
THEN TWENTY
THEN TWENTY FIVE.
ONE NIGHT, CIRIN AWAKENS TO THE SOUND OF FOOTSTEPS INSIDE HER MODEST DWELLING.

SERNA?
LIES!
SERNA - WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?
'READING' MINDS ISN'T THE WORST OF IT...
I'M NOT SERNA.
YOU'RE SERNA


YOU ARE CHARGED WITH UNDERMINING THE FIVE CORNERSTONES THROUGH EXCESSIVE APPROPRIATION OF RESOURCES FOR COMMUNAL SAFETY
ARE YOU MAD?
NO, SERNA
YOU ARE THE ONE WHO'S MAD
LIES!
'UNDERMINING THE FIVE CORNERSTONES'
CHANGING OTHERS' MINDS IS A WOMAN'S DARKEST SECRET

'AGREED'
'AGREED'
'INTERNMENT FOR LIFE'
LIES!
AGREED.
AGREED
CRINIST JUSTICE.
AND CIRIN IS ITS FIRST VICTIM


MMPH!
MMPH!


'TRAITOR!'
'SERNA'S HEAD IS SHAVED AND HER LIPS SEWN SHUT.
SHE IS PUT ON PUBLIC DISPLAY, VILLIFIED FOR HER GREED AND ARROGANCE
'CIRIN' GOES INTO SECLUSION, 'DISTRAUGHT' OVER THE BETRAYAL OF HER 'MOVEMENT'
SHE VOWS THAT RATIONS FOR COMMUNAL SAFETY WILL NEVER AGAIN EXCEED TEN PERCENT
SHE ASSUMES CONTROL OF THE COMMUNAL SAFETY OFFICERS AS 'PENANCE' CONSTRUCTING HER 'FORTRESS OF SAFENESS' — THE LARGEST MILITARY COMPOUND IN THE FELDWAR VALLEY
'TEN PERCENT OF RATIONS FOR COMMUNAL SAFETY' BECOMES THE SIXTH CORNERSTONE
'SERNA' IS KEPT ALIVE UNDER ARMED GUARD. 'CIRIN' IS WIDELY PRAISED FOR EXHIBITING SUCH COMPASSION TOWARDS THE ONE WHO HAS BETRAYED THE MOTHERHOOD.
LIES!

essay
by
stephen l. holland

NOW OR NEVER

a lesson in basic economics, backed with hard evidence and hope for the future

The time has come to talk candidly and constructively about the future of the Comic-Book Industry.

The time has come to talk about markets, diversity, quality and growth.

At this point of uneasy flux, where huge changes occur daily in the very structure of the industry, and a single line of optimism comes qualified with three paragraphs of doubt, we hope that now, finally, ears that have so far been deaf to opportunity will listen to what we have to say and to the evidence we now have to support our beliefs.

In October 1994, following our organisation of the record-breaking **Cerebus UK Tour '93**, Mark Simpson and I opened PAGE 45, a shop which reflects our belief that quality and diversity, when managed with professionalism, business (common) sense and imaginative marketing, are the future of the Industry.

Given the condition of the market, this venture required careful, reasoned planning. This planning, in the form of a 90-page document (or manifesto), which objectively assessed the state of the comic-book industry from a cold economic viewpoint, earned us the personal endorsement of David Williams, the Senior Vice President of Pizza Hut International, a professional working in an international company not known for economic folly.

This, as succinctly as possible, is the reasoning behind PAGE 45's purpose, strategy, and initial success:

The Comic-Book Industry is an infant industry based on a fledgling medium. Its potential is as vast as any other entertainment industry, for in theory the medium is like any other; just as there are books, films and music to suit all tastes, so there is a comic book for everyone.

These comics exist now, have existed for years, and are currently multiplying every month in wider and wider varieties, but they have not been reaching their potential readers. Instead, for over two decades, we have allowed ourselves to be sidetracked to a single genre of limited appeal, which is why the percentage of the American and UK population currently reading comics is still so pathetically tiny.

This is not an inherent weakness in the medium, but a culpable weakness in our industry, which, in its apathy, timidity, and its total failure to grasp basic principles of market economics, has so far failed to transform a sub-culture into a thriving, universally enjoyed medium.

No Industry can survive — much less thrive — on one small genre of a medium. Its market is consequently narrow, precluding any possibility of *real* growth, and it leaves us vulnerable to the inevitable crash that comes to any genre in any medium (for example, the Western film).

Different audiences enjoy different films, and different ears enjoy different music. Those industries cater for this demand by publishing, marketing and selling such a variety of material that almost everyone in

the modern world buys records, visits the cinema, reads books. But in the Comic-Book Industry almost *no one* buys a comic, because this industry caters to no one but that tiny, tiny percentage of the population who would ever contemplate reading about superheroes.

The equivalent would be if the Music Industry sold nothing but Rap. Can you imagine that? Certainly those who enjoyed Rap would be buying the stuff, but no one else would be buying any music at all. That would starve the music industry of billions of the dollars they currently enjoy and which we in the comic-book industry are losing out on every year.

We have wasted away our resources for far too long and allowed the public's perception of comics to be narrowed into a ghetto marked 'Superheroes', 'Kid Stuff', and 'Junk-Bond Paradise'. This is what the public believes, this is now what the press believes, and it is our own fault, because — heaven help us — this is what we inside the industry have deceived ourselves into believing, that the term 'comics' comes prefixed with a silent 'superhero', and we have traded upon this self-imposed limitation for far too long, exploiting this last vestige of a saturated market base until all we are left with are faltering sales from a tired, old genre.

This is the reason why the comic-book market imploded so dramatically (sorry, *superhero* comic-book market — there has been no such decline in demand for comics like *Love & Rockets, Cerebus, Bone, Strangers in Paradise, One Bad Rat, Naughty Bits,* and *Hate* — quite the reverse, which should tell you *something*); this is the reason why comic shops are raided, whilst book-shops are free to stock material by The Marquis de Sade; and this is the reason why PAGE 45 has to fight tooth and nail to *give* distributors our money, in exchange for delivering the diversity of material we now sell to our ever-expanding audience of women, graduates, businessmen, business-women, music lovers, art lovers, prose readers, film-goers, parents, grandparents... in short to the 99.9% of the population who until now had never bought a comic book in their life for the simple reason that they had never seen one — or even heard of one — they might enjoy.

Now, no one can pretend with the best will in the world that a transformation could be executed overnight. The public's perception of comics has been limited, and it will take time to undo the damage we have wrought. But if the end goal is the patronisation of 100% of the population, the custom, the spending power of — god knows — 10,000 times more people than currently visit our stores, then don't you think it is well past time we made a start?

Some retailers have made a start, preceding us in the realisation that a change can be effected from ground level. Others can make a start by replacing the superhero posters in their shop fronts (everyone knows that a comic shop sells superheroes) with displays more attractive to new target audiences, by building a demand for the real mainstream material to those who then come in to browse, and by insisting that their distributors maintain a regular supply of this material as its audience grows. These retailers will sell just as many superheroes as ever (we do), but make additional profits on additional material.

Similarly distributors, who have the power to assist both sides (the publisher and the retailer), can make a start by giving over the covers of some of their catalogues to material other than superheroes (I hesitate to use the word 'alternative' because this material is only an alternative to superheroes — it's actually far more mainstream) and actively encouraging this shift, so eliminating the mixed signals they're sending their retailers. More importantly, they can overhaul their ordering processes to cater to demand on reorders of titles which often start small but grow once established, and encourage new publishers to supply them with a wider range of comic-book material targeted towards other demographic groups.

Larger publishers who continue to bombast the public with deeply unhelpful publicity about superheroes, I have no time for; this reinforces general prejudice and does more harm than good. However, publishers of quality material can get together with distributors and sympathetic retailers to push their material to target audiences outside of the current comic-book market (two cheers for DC and its outreach programme, because it included *Hellblazer* and *Sandman*, both literate books — we'd welcome that in England — minus-one to DC for including superheroes, thereby associating the two and diminishing the impact). They can also follow Dark Horse's lead by publishing a diversity of material, some of spectacular quality and mass appeal.

Then more creators and self-publishers can finally come out with the stuff they've always wanted to, but which they have been previously discouraged from attempting, because they've been told there's no point. We now know there is a point — just look at

Bone and *Strangers in Paradise.*

Now the vicious circle has turned into a positive cycle and everyone's making more money.

Can't be done? It *has* been done.

Here at PAGE 45 we're not waiting for others to do our work for us — we've made our own start, dealing within the perceived market. But in just six months of operation, the progress we've made proves that this strategy really does work.

For this month, *excluding* back issues, for every one copy of *Batman*, we've sold:

10 *Cerebus World Tour Book*
4.5 *Sandman*
4 *Hellblazer*
4 *Bone*
4 *Cerebus*
3 *Naughty Bits*
3 *Hate*
2 *Strangers in Paradise*
2 *THB*
2 *Jim*

We now await reorders; if our distributors deliver them, you can expect these figures to grow.

But it doesn't even have to take six months for the sales to pick up. By simply offering these titles in the first place, during our first month we sold 40 *Cerebus* books, 23 *Sandman* books, 19 *Bone* books, 12 *Concrete* books. These are books. We sold more *Cerebus* books than all the other superhero reprint volumes put together.

Coming back to my point about reorders, during our first month our customers chose to buy 92 *Uncanny X-Men.* This includes current and back issues (with roughly 325 to choose from).

And as for *Naughty Bits* (you know, that title by Roberta Gregory, involving a *woman,* just trying to get through her *life,* working in an *office,* trying to buy *groceries,* find sex, free space, and her next tampon?), as for *Naughty Bits,* we sold:

Week 1: 61 copies
Week 2: 33 copies
Week 3: 39 copies
Week 4: 37 copies
Week 5: 48 copies

That's a lot of *Naughty Bits* per month, and there are only 14 to choose from. Per month, rather than per issue, that makes it our highest-selling comic.

Quite simply, books like *Naughty Bits, Bone* and *Strangers in Paradise* have a far broader appeal than any superhero title could ever have, because they play to a much wider range of demographic groups. They just need the correct exposure in the right environment.

So what's the correct environment?

Firstly, we chose a location just off the city centre, between music shops, on the way to the Theatre, Universities, and a well-known nightclub/gig venue. In other words, on a route regularly used by our primary target audience.

Secondly, the shop itself is designed to lure in precisely those people who don't normally visit a comic shop — women, families, businessmen — and keep them in. As I mentioned earlier, the superhero crowd will find and has found us anyway; so we went for the more subtle approach with a name and logo which, whilst catchy and allusive, avoids alerting the general public's stigmatic preconceptions as to what they might find inside ('content neutral, style positive,' as Scott McCloud said). Similarly the window displays, which are theatrical but uncluttered.

The style and layout of the shop are equally important. The customers we've now succeeded in intriguing are greeted first by books like *Urban Legends, Bone, Love & Rockets, Gon, Strangers in Paradise, Tales of Oscar Wilde, Sandman, Mr. Punch, Akira, Sin City, Cerebus, The Crow, Calvin & Hobbes,* lying face front on black-ash shelving set on a warm burgundy carpet under the bright glow of halogen spotlights. They are then beckoned further in through the wide aisle with prints by the likes of Julie Doucet, Otomo, PAN, and the Hernandez brothers, T-shirts by the same, thence to wander through a full range of *From Hell, Naughty Bits, Hate, Eightball, Bone,* on to Vertigo and the like with *Ren & Stimpy, Simpsons* and other media-related comics beckoning from the visible rear of the shop. Last of all come the superheroes, who need no further exposure but sell themselves quite happily at the far right-hand **tenth** of the shop, away from the immediate view of women and adults. The overall effect is of a cross between a bookshop and an art gallery. Basically, it's warm, comfortable, and exciting.

Thirdly, we treat this shop as a bookshop, where walk-in customers can find the book they want when they want it. That means giving over priorities from back issues (oh, yes, we have those — but in moderation, for we order to sell through — set apart and upright as in a bookcase) to reprint volumes and graphic novels. These are so important for the customer who is unused to monthly comics and who wants something complete to

read without having to chase up old editions. These we manage with weekly stock checks and reorder accordingly, keeping availability high and cash-flow flowing.

Fourthly, we *care* about our comics. We love the medium and it shows. Rather than hire others, we work on the shop floor, greet our customers, and take time to introduce them to the variety of material we offer. We understand the newcomer's curiosity and confusion, but are secure in the knowledge that whoever walks in through the door can be helped to find something to suit his or her other interests.

So, this is the result: a thriving business in a supposedly ailing industry, expanding as rapidly as our market base, frequented by as many demographic groups as you could imagine.

However — and this is the bit — we have done so with the minimum of help from our distributors, who as individual sales people have probably tried, but are themselves hampered by an archaic system which still caters almost exclusively to the past.

For example, we've tried to order *Concrete* books, *Why I Hate Saturn* books, *Baker Street* books — in quantities of between 10 and 15. We've placed reorders for *THB, Strangers in Paradise* and *Thieves & Kings* — up to 50 for each of these (we were told that the minimum order for *Thieves & Kings* was 25, but it's actually one, and this discrepancy is symptomatic of the apathy and reluctance to order these comics).

We've even written to the publishers to ensure their availability. Lou Bank at Dark Horse says they'd fill a single order for a *Concrete* book. M'Oak says Diamond has been ordering *Thieves & Kings* steadily.

Even our distributor lists them (more than a month after our order was placed, in the case of *Thieves & Kings*) as available for reorder. But we've yet to receive, for example, any *Thieves & Kings* reorders at all.

Someone, somewhere, is being deeply unhelpful, and I expect, any day now, to be told that much of this, which was in print weeks after we ordered it, is now out of print.

Our orders to Fantagraphics, Drawn & Quarterly and other publishers average some £1,000 per month. The reorders for other comics and books we'd like to purchase — from *Desert Peach* to *Baker Street* — would come to some £1,500 per month. And we would gladly, joyously give a distributor who supplied them to us that extra £2,500 per month. But it seems we cannot *give* this money away.

We've gone and done it anyway, incurring extra costs through ordering direct where possible (in England we don't have the luxury of the '40 and 5' programme instigated by Sim and Sweet, though all power to them) and it has still paid off. We're simply not prepared to be dissuaded by these obstacles.

The point is, however, that they needn't be there, they shouldn't be there, and they'd better not be there much longer, because whether or not the leaked 'confirmation' that Marvel intends to transform Heroes World into an exclusive distribution network for its own publications is true, distributors can no longer rely on the superhero genre to line their pockets and guarantee our custom. They will need to prove to us that they can supply us with other services and other material.

Celebrate Diversity was a laudable idea — a touch timid, but a real step in the right direction. Unfortunately, it was never backed up, and has since left in our mouths the rank taste of lip service, for it has come and gone and the books are simply no longer available to us.

So, we can carry on with the few other professional retailers and the quality self-publishers, expanding the market base in individual cities, catering to mail-order, and thriving as we do so.

But how much more positive, how much more constructive, how much more successful it would be if we cooperated to expand our market base by promoting a diverse selection of *quality* material in a professional environment and in an imaginative, cooperative public campaign, whilst ensuring this material's availability in the stores themselves.

Here at PAGE 45 we are not short of ideas, and welcome everyone else's. Publicly, privately, but above all constructively, please get in contact if you have anything to say.

Remember, there is a lot more money to be made from 100% of the population than from 0.1% of the population.

There is no time left for kind words, lip service, and backward glances.

The future is here. It's a glorious opportunity.

Stand and deliver, or stumble and fall.

Now, who wants our money?

Stephen L. Holland

Partner/Manager
PAGE 45

MISUNDERSTANDING COMICS

Can sequential art be taught? Or 'Yoo-hoo! I'm back here this issue!'

I have often been tempted to enter the realm of teaching as it exists at the periphery of the comic-book field and a few weeks back at the Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD) I finally succumbed. Two days (of workshops, portfolio reviews and lectures) later I found my initial thinking — that it is virtually impossible to teach sequential art — unchanged for the most part. This is not to say that the experience was worthless. The value inherent in anything is purely subjective. If nothing else, it gave me grist for this particular mill.

Since my workshops largely consisted of storytelling, I put a fair bit of thought into the subject before I arrived — by my nature, composing a distillation of fundamentals suitably general in nature so that it would have *some* value, whether the listener was a would-be super-hero artist, avant-garde Fantagraphics-y type, or what have you: or so I hoped. The advantage of 'pitching' ideas to a group of individuals raised on television and video games is that you can tell when something is striking a resonant chord. The attention span is brief but the glitter in the eyes is, for that very reason, unmistakable. Highlights:

To draw a comic-book page, you enter a kind of cyberspace, a virtual reality of your own creation. Depending on the comic-book page, you will spend anywhere from five to ten hours roughing it in in pencil, placing the word balloons, defining the parameters of page and panels, tightening up the pencils, ruling up the lettering, inking the lettering and then inking the pictures. With the average comic-book page, you will have created three or four seconds' worth of cyberspace, virtual reality, for your reader. It takes weeks to produce ten to twenty minutes of cyberspace, months to produce an hour or two worth of cyberspace, years to produce a day or two days' worth of cyberspace. A career in comic books devours your life, great huge chunks of your life. If you are serious about it (few are who *think* they are), it is something that you will be doing day after day, week after week, month after month, year after year.

How you spend that time is up to you. Since the largest commitment of time and energy is yours, outweighing that of your readers a thousand to one, you might as well make it as enjoyable for yourself as you can.

Let's go back to the eight or ten hours you are going to be devoting to each page you produce. You can spend an hour pencilling a page, ten minutes writing it, a half-hour lettering it and seven hours inking it. You can spend two hours writing it, four hours pencilling it, an hour lettering it and forty minutes inking it. The one is not a 'good' page and the other a 'bad' page. They are two very different pages, reflecting the particular end of the spectrum that the individual creator's sensibilities occupy. What part of doing a comic-book page do you enjoy the most? What skills, among writing, pencilling, lettering and inking, most appeal to you? I pointed out to one guy who considered his pencilling his greatest 'strength' that he might be well served to sit down and reassess his work, basing his decision not on what his 'strength' is (that is to say, the aspect of his work which has garnered the most praise from his fellow students, teachers and mainstream editors), but, rather, on what gives him the most satisfaction. Comic-book work is idiosyncratic. The problem with any kind of authoritarian structure implied by a schoolroom format is that it presupposes that something idiosyncratic can be taught successfully. I heard most of the educational clichés over the weekend, passed down faithfully from generation to generation. 'You have to know the rules before you can break them — the best artists know anatomy inside and out before they start distorting it.' I've always wanted to do a cartoon of a hot-shot young super-hero artist at a convention, sitting in front of a huge poster of his character with muscles piled on top of muscles in violation of every rule of anatomy, reviewing a wannabe's portfolio and saying to the kid, 'Draw from life.' Knowing anatomy inside and out is important if you want to draw accurate anatomy. If accurate anatomy interests you, you will find your way around it. I'm a big fan of Kyle Baker's work, his storytelling. What appeals to me most is his page and panel composition, his sense of gesture, facial expression, posture. I can guarantee you that his knowledge of anatomy doesn't rival, say, Burne Hogarth's, but there is virtually nothing in Hogarth's work that appeals to me. His gestures are contrived, his facial expressions are contrived, his postures are contrived. That doesn't mean that Baker is right and Hogarth is wrong. It means that Baker occupies a point on the spectrum of interests which make up a comic-book page that is close to my own. The drawing elements that interest me evidently interest him.

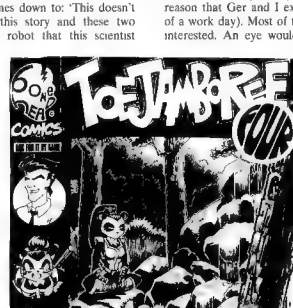
There are people who have a genuine affinity for the authoritarian impulse. There *is* value in 'teaching' comic-book creation for the would-be 'teacher'. Having to backtrack continuously through the most rudimentary aspects of your craft, having to explain them out loud, finding new ways to clarify and define the basics lends a kind of reinforcement to your own work. Essentially, the grinding process of spending forty minutes discussing a single panel's composition, slowing the process of creating a half-second's cyberspace until it consumes ten times the amount of time it would take to create it yourself, makes pencilling and inking seem like a week's vacation in the tropics by comparison. If a career in comic books devours your life, I feel safe in saying that *teaching* a career in comic books chews a lot faster. I'm not convinced that someone who relentlessly searches out some authority to endorse and criticise his or her efforts is well served by the process. I would suspect that for every creator who will make monumental leaps in the various disciplines by modifying his or her skills to please a teacher, there are other creators who will lose their way, lose touch with their gut instincts and individual sensibilities in attempting to create a compromise style satisfying both to themselves and their 'guide'. I'm not convinced that self-declared 'teachers' are equipped to distinguish one from the other, and their teaching of a subjective view of 'professionalism' probably damages many idiosyncratic talents — grinding down the square peg until it fits in the round hole — even as it assists those seeking a position in the traditional mainstream.

I found it disheartening (as I always do) that so many of the samples I was asked to review consisted of pencilled pages only. I take care of this in the convention context by telling people that I review only pages which are pencilled, inked and lettered. One guy finally told me that I was the only one who ever said that. Mainstream editors (evidently) want to look only at pencilled pages. An inker can always be assigned and the writer can just fit the words in where there's room — after that it's the letterer's job to cover up faces and arms and have people talking out of sequence in the panel. Goes a long way towards explaining why mainstream comics are unreadable. The compromise I reached with most of the students was to photocopy their pencilled pages and save the photocopies to show editors. After that, letter and ink them so you are continuing to develop ALL of the skills that go into a comic-book page. Face it — you're going to get tired of being treated like shit EVENTUALLY and at that point you're going to want to do something on your own, and ten years later it's a little too late to suddenly learn how to ink and letter.

The other inherent problem with the process (I found) was that the environment did not lend itself to a careful review of those

samples which *were* finished stories or fragments of finished stories. When people are (artists are) sitting and watching you reviewing their pages, there is only so much time before you have to start jabbering at them. Time and again I found myself trying to explain ways of improving storytelling skills without having the slightest idea of what the story was in front of me. With the work that I get in in printed or photocopy form at the studio, I can approach it as if it's a comic book I'm flipping through in a store. I read the first few pages until either my mind starts to wander and I have no idea what's going on (or what's supposed to be going on), or I become interested and read it through to its conclusion. With the limited time available and the difficulty in focussing on something in such a distractive environment, I was forced to assess most work on the initial impression that the artwork created.

MOST of the time, my reaction comes down to: 'This doesn't interest me.' I've started reading this story and these two characters are talking about some robot that this scientist created and how some critical part has been stolen by... I mean, it just doesn't interest me. I feel no great urge to turn the page. I don't want to know what happens next. I got a glimmering of interest when this little guy over here showed up. His first line of dialogue was really good and I was interested in what his relationship was with the first two characters, but then they all started talking in this pseudo-scientific mumbo jumbo and I started nodding off.



About the only interesting thing I had to say about storytelling (in the course of, oh, three hours or so) was that there are strengths to the comic-book page. One of the most obvious and most overlooked is that you can introduce an element — BAM — for one panel that breaks up the continuity. You can't do that in a movie or on television where, if you introduce a curve ball and then return to the primary story, you'd better make sure that no one says anything important for the next thirty seconds because it's going to take the audience that long to adjust. 'What was that thing a minute ago? How does that fit in? Did I really just see that?' Because the printed page is right there in front of the readers, they can look at the discordant panel, do a double take, read the next panel, go back and read the discordant panel, go back and read the panel before it and then go back to where they left off, all in a matter of a few seconds. They're disoriented, but wide awake. If, two pages later on, they encounter a SECOND discordant panel which picks up where the first one left off while the primary story is getting interesting, then they are fully awake and galloping through the pages like there's no tomorrow.

The most common error I saw (and it IS an error — some things are not idiosyncratic) was misplaced word balloons. The Western eye reads one of two ways: left to right and/or top to bottom. The reader closes in his or her attention on the most obvious first word balloon or caption — the one closest to the top left corner of the page. The eye then pulls back a bit and seeks out the next most natural block of words (or word) either below the first one or to the right of that one. The character who speaks first in a panel has to be on the left side of the panel or near the top of the panel. Panels should be planned to give a balance of words and pictures. If there are two people in a panel and each of them has one word balloon, you have to divide the panel into four sections — one section for each person and one for each word balloon. You have to rough in the words at the same time you're roughing in the people and leave space around the words to put in the shape of the balloon. The word balloons are part of the composition — an integral part.

I got really tired of reading panels that went 'I don't doubt that for a minute.' 'I could kill you right here and now.' 'Nor should you doubt it — even for a second.' Nothing defeats the purpose of a rapid-fire exchange than having to rearrange the dialogue in your mind as you're reading it. 'I could kill you...' goes in the top left. 'I don't doubt that...' goes directly under it. If it goes to the right of it, you have to move 'Nor should you...' as far below the 'exchange' lines as you can get it, so the eye isn't tempted for a millisecond to read it second. If you put the 'I don't doubt that...' in between the other two lines of dialogue, then put it IN BETWEEN them. Spread 'em apart and get that interruption in there where it is actually interrupting.

In retrospect, that was about all that I had to say — although, owing to the structure, I babbled for hours on end until I was even more weary of my own voice than usual (the principal reason that Ger and I exchange very few words in the course of a work day). Most of the students were fast asleep although interested. An eye would glitter here or there from time to time, signalling that something had registered (however temporarily). You say what you say and people hear what they hear. The two things seldom have much in common, so any good that I accomplished was inadvertent and had far more to do with an individual student's idiosyncratic digestive intellect than with any glittery 'truth morsel' I've been entrusted with.

Apart from the cyberspace analogy and the choice of emphasis that that implies (doing more of what you like to do and less of what you don't like to do), the only other time that twenty to thirty percent of the eyes were glittering was when I mentioned that you could stand ten feet away from five pages of *Spawn*, five pages of *Cerebus* and five pages of *From Hell*, and you'd have a pretty good idea of whose work you were looking at. A creator's style doesn't exist exclusively in the style of crosshatching, brush stroke or pen line. There is also an overall 'look' that is idiosyncratic and which evolves in tandem with the pencilling and inking techniques. I encouraged the students to envision their stories, not just as individual pictures and panels and pencilling and inking problems, but to take a larger view of what their pages will look like from a distance of ten feet and to work to make that 'look' distinctively their own.

It was an interesting experience, and I'd like to thank Bo Hampton for talking me into it and the SCAD staff for the plane ticket, hotel room and a couple of wonderful dinners (*Victoria's* and *Bistro*, respectively). Although my view that a creator is best served by isolation and introspection in embarking on a comics career (and that self-publishing is the only sensible choice) remains intact, it's always intriguing to visit the Loyal Opposition on its home turf.

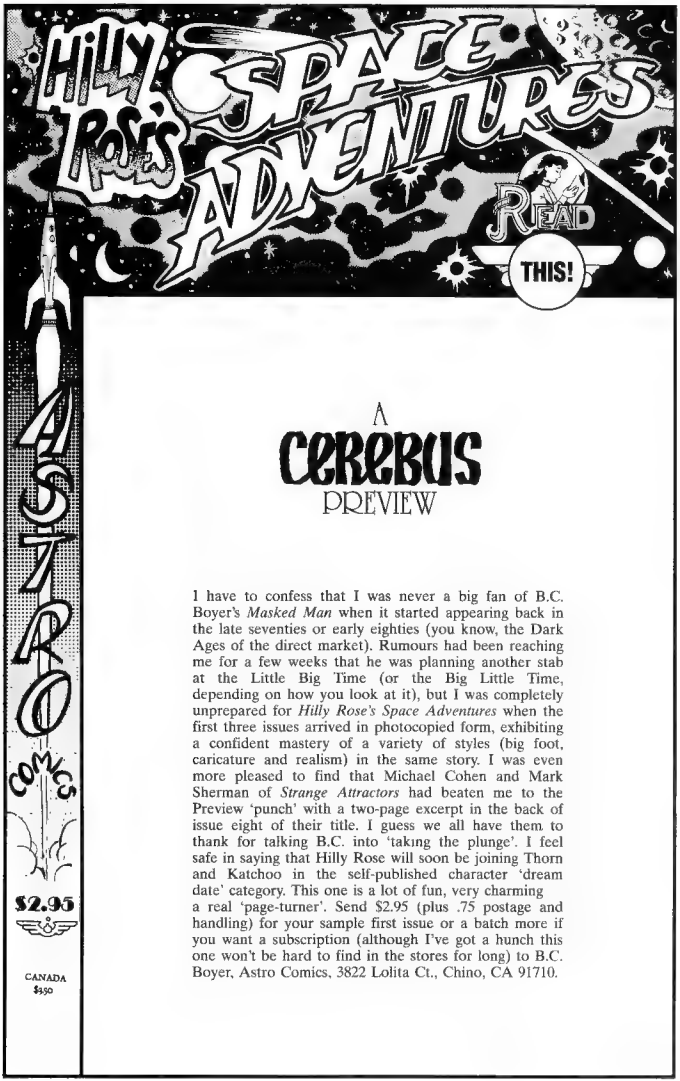
And if the net effect of the clash of views is a mutual assessment that the 'members opposite' are 'Misunderstanding Comics', I'm sure we're all none the worse for the 'wear and tear'.

Most notable self-published ashcans at SCAD:

HYDRANT #1 – Tonyefa Oyake (no address in the book)

DWINDLERS OF THE NEGATIVE SPACE #2 – Brett Wood (ditto)

TOEJAMBOREE #4 – Travis Pitts, South Side P.O. Box 61612, Savannah, GA 31420 ($2.50 plus .75 postage & handling)



A CEREBUS PREVIEW

I have to confess that I was never a big fan of B.C. Boyer's *Masked Man* when it started appearing back in the late seventies or early eighties (you know, the Dark Ages of the direct market). Rumours had been reaching me for a few weeks that he was planning another stab at the Little Big Time (or the Big Little Time, depending on how you look at it), but I was completely unprepared for *Hilly Rose's Space Adventures* when the first three issues arrived in photocopied form, exhibiting a confident mastery of a variety of styles (big foot, caricature and realism) in the same story. I was even more pleased to find that Michael Cohen and Mark Sherman of *Strange Attractors* had beaten me to the Preview 'punch' with a two-page excerpt in the back of issue eight of their title. I guess we all have them to thank for talking B.C. into 'taking the plunge'. I feel safe in saying that Hilly Rose will soon be joining Thorn and Katchoo in the self-published character 'dream date' category. This one is a lot of fun, very charming a real 'page-turner'. Send $2.95 (plus .75 postage and handling) for your sample first issue or a batch more if you want a subscription (although I've got a hunch this one won't be hard to find in the stores for long) to B.C. Boyer, Astro Comics, 3822 Lolita Ct., Chino, CA 91710.

WHY DON'T YOU GO LOOK FOR SOME CLUES.
AND STAY OUT OF TROUBLE.
OKAY! GREAT!
YOU GOT IT!
SIGH. OH BACH. I CAN'T HAVE A POOR INNOCENT CHILD HANGING AROUND ME ALL THE TIME. WHAT SHOULD I DO?
CHOKE HER.
BY THE WAY, CAMMY . . . ARE YOU SURE YOU'RE ALRIGHT?
SPURT SPURT SPURT
OKAY, THEN. GET SOME CLOSE-UPS. I'M GOING TO NEED A LOT OF VISUALS ON THIS ONE. THIS STORY COULD BE IMPORTANT!

MR. JEAN-CLAUDE! MAY WE SEE YOU FOR A MINUTE?!
BOINK
SOB. OH NO! ZEE PRESS ALREADY?! DON'T HAF TIME!
I KNOW NASINK! NASINK!
HMMMM. NICE PETUNIAS.
PLEASE, SIR. JUST A FEW QUESTIONS.
I WONDER WHAT THEY'RE DOING TONIGHT.
CAN'T YOU SEE MY LIFE EESS IN RUINS?! I HAD THEE MOST VALUABLE COLLECTION OF ART NOUVEAU IN THEES SYSTEM. AND NOW... BEECAUSE OF THAT CRAZY...!
MR. JEAN-CLAUDE, SIR! I FOUND HER. SHE'S STILL THERE.. IN THE LOUNGE!
GOOD! I MUST SEE HER!!
SOON..
I...I...CAN'T BELIEVE IT.. MY PRECIOUS CHRISTINA... STEEEL INTACT!
IT'S JUST A STATUE.

..CARVED BY THEE BLIND ARTEEST.. JASQUE DELANCE!
SHE EEES NO ORDINARY STATUE, YOU FOOL! SHEE'S PRICELESS..! PRICELESS!
IT TOOK ME YEARS...AND EVERY LAST PENNY I EARNED, TO GET HER!
IT'S THE MOST EXPENSIVE CREATION IN THEES GALAXY!
THANK GAWD SHE SURVIVED THE ONSLAUGHT OF THAT RAVING LUNATIC!
PLEASE, MR. JEAN-CLAUDE. WE NEED SOME ANSWERS!
WAIT A MINUTE! THEES IS ONE OF THOSE CAMMY'S, IS IT NOT?.. THEIR PICTURES GO WORLDWIDE!
..
HEH HEH PERHAPS I MIGHT HAVE A LEETLE TIME AFTER ALL.

A COMB, PLEASE.
WHAT DO YOU EXPECT FROM A GUY WITH TWO HAIRS.
FLIP FLIP FLIP FLIP FLIP
BOINK
HILLY ?
YES, CHEMICALS
I'VE GOT SOME INFO ON JEAN-CLAUDE. I'M FAXING IT OVER TO YOU, NOW.
THANKS.

TAKA CLICK
TAKA CLICK
TAKA CLICK
TAKA CLICK
TAKA CLICK
HMMM. VERY INTERESTING.
BOINK!
IT SAYS HERE YOU'VE BEEN RECEIVING SOME KIND OF PAYOFFS.
CRASH!
NO!
NO!
I DON'T BELIEVE IT!
I DON'T BELIEVE IT!

WHAT IS IT?
THIS MECHANISM HERE TRANSCRIBES ALL FAXES THAT GO AND COME FROM THESE OFFICES!!
SO.
CHEMICALS JUST SENT A FAX TO HILLY THAT COULD CONNECT US TO ALL THE DISASTERS!
OH. OH.
WELL . . . I GUESS THE ONLY THING TO HOPE FOR NOW . . IS THAT SHE DOESN'T FIGURE IT OUT . . .
. . HOPE SHE'S AS EMPTY HEADED AS YOU SAY SHE IS.
I JUST PRAY . . . TO WHATEVER GODS THERE ARE . . .
. . THAT SHE IS NO WHERE NEAR THE REPORTER SHE HOPES TO BE.
PLEASE, HILLY . . . WHATEVER YOU DO . . . PUT AWAY THAT CUTE LITTLE JOURNALISTIC BUG YOU HAVE . . .
AND STAY BEING MY SWEET . . . INNOCENT . . . NAIVE GIRL.

HMMM. I'VE NEVER SEEN A GROWN CAT CRY BEFORE.
IT'S JUST A STATUE, JEAN-CLAUDE.
SOB
ACTUALLY . . . TO BE MORE PRECISE . . . NOW IT'S A PILE OF REAL NEAT ROCKS!
ARRGH
SO WHAT SO WE DO NOW, HILLY?
HILLY?
HUMMM . . .
OH OH...

HILLY ROSE

PREMIERES IN MAY

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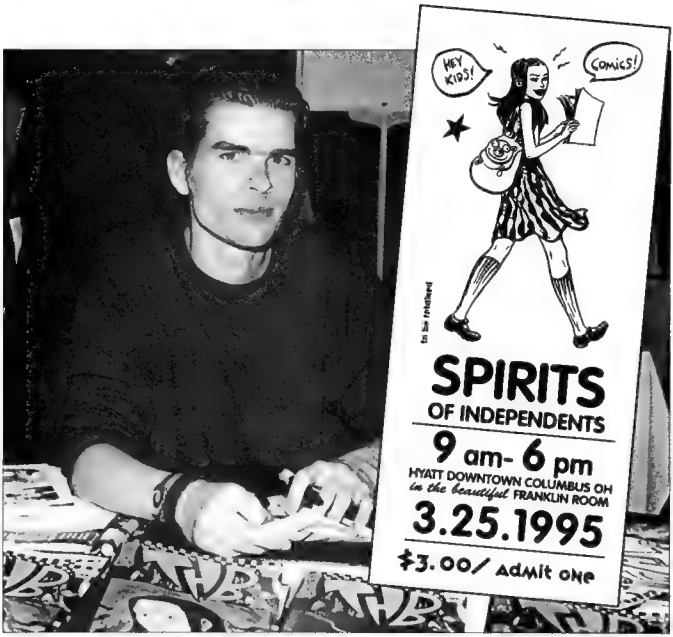
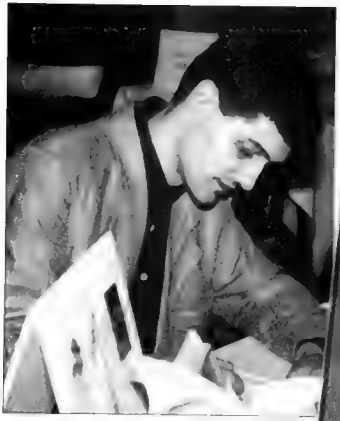
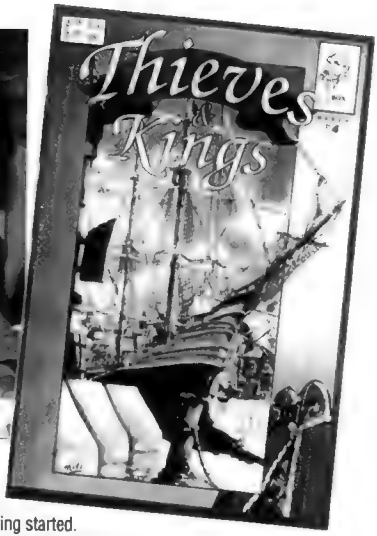


THE BIG GUNS! Paul Pope of THB with his ticket design. Back issues are available from the VERY prolific Mr. Pope at Horse Press, P.O. Box 3112, Columbus, OH 43210-0112.

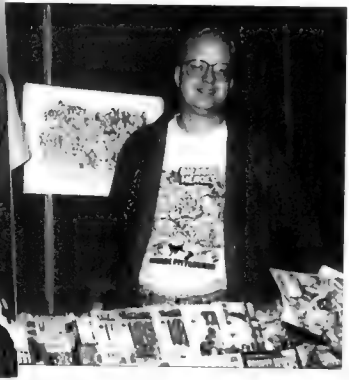
NO COVER REPRODUCTION
for Sturdy Steve Bissette's TYRANT. It's already selling as much as CEREBUS is! Steve had photocopies of issue 3 with him. If it doesn't win for 'Best Single Issue' next year there's no justice in the world. The night before the show he did his history of horror comics slide show 'Journey Into Fear'. Three hours went by like fifteen minutes. Truly amazing. He'll be doing the show the night before the Manchester, Chicago, Pittsburgh, Kansas City and Kitchener stops starting at 6 p.m. Spiderbaby Grafix, P.O. Box 442, Wilmington, VT 05363.

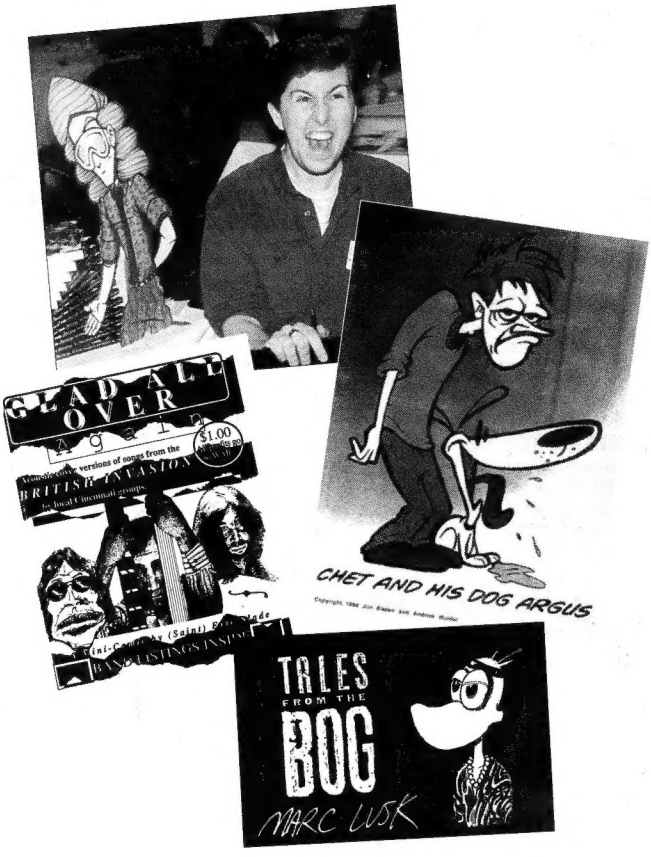




THIEVES & KINGS by Mark Oakley (M'Oak) wowed 'em both at MotorCity Con and SPIRITS/Columbus. An amazing story-teller riding a wave of success that's just getting started.
Back issues: I Box Publishing, P.O. Box 6671, Station A, Toronto, Ontario M5W 1X5.

DANDY DON SIMPSON'S BIZARRE HEROES hits double digits with the debut of issue 10 at SPIRITS/ Columbus. Collect 'em all from Fiasco Comics, Dept. T, P.O. Box 44326, Pittsburgh, PA 15205.





CLOCKWISE FROM THE TOP Chris Howard belts out his a capella version of 'Twist and Shout' to attract the paying customers while cartoon partner Jeff Wasson moves copies of their 304 page DRESSED FOR SUCCESS: THE DIRTY BAKER'S DOZEN graphic novel ($12.00 US, $15.00 CAN. from Egesta Comics, P.O. Box 63, Station P, Toronto, Ontario M5S 2S6). CHET and HIS DOG ARGUS by Jim Elston and Andries Mulder, 411 E. 15th Ave., Columbus, OH 43201. TALES FROM THE BOG mini available from Marc Lusk, 705 Panorama Terrace, Birmingham, AL 35216. GLAD ALL OVER AGAIN minis, $1.00 each from Eric Slade, WAIF FM 88.3, P.O. Box 6126, Cincinnati, OH 45206-0126.

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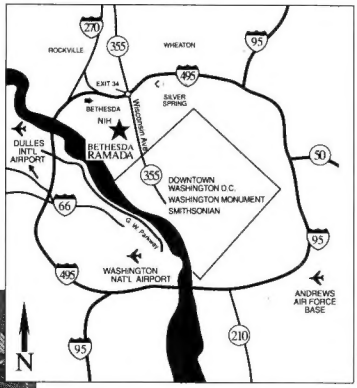

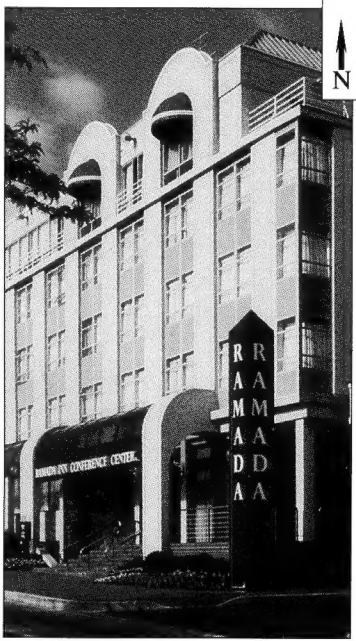

- 8 miles from downtown Washington, DC
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- Ger and I will be in 'Chatters' restaurant and bar Thursday June 22 and Friday night to discuss self-publishing
- $10 admission (proceeds to the Comic Book Legal Defense Fund)
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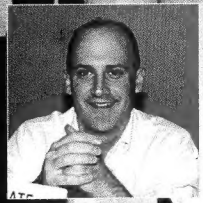
'Cerebus the Prime Minister" resin statue by Bruno Aprea of Ultimate Art (Milan) one-of-a-kind (includes 'gold seal' certificate of authenticity) eight inches tall starting bid: 100 dollars U.S. bidding closes 31 August '95 5 p.m. EST to benefit the Comic Book Legal Defense Fund phone bids: 413 586 6967 fax bids: 413 582 9046 support the Comic Book Legal Defense Fund Box 693 Northampton, MA 01060

COLUMBUS!



(inset) Retailer du Jour Steve Snyder of *Central City Comics.*

The Columbus/SPIRITS OF INDEPENDENCE exhibitors after the show.

photo by Gerhard